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ENG 3009G-013: Myth and Culture

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English 3009G Section 013

Myth and Culture

Fall 2000

Dr. Carol Stevens

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Course Description

The catalog describes this course as follows: "Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, the course will examine relationships among mythic, historical, anthropological, and scientific ways of understanding." What that means for us is that we will be reading Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Asian, and North American myths, and learning as much as we can about how the stories relate to and help us understand the cultures they come from. The class will involve a lot of small group work in a variety of activities related to the material and the understanding of cultures, some lectures, and lots of general discussion. There will be a great deal of reading and writing.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester I expect you to know:

- ♦ *What myths are and how they function*
- ♦ *How to distinguish among myths, legends, and folk tales*
- ♦ *Stories of some of the world's great cultures (specifically, Assyrian-Sumerian-Babylonian, Hindu, Tibetan Buddhist, and Native American, especially Mayan and Navajo)*
- ♦ *How these cultures differ from and are similar to each other and our own*
- ♦ *How myths affect the practices and beliefs in a culture*

With this knowledge, I hope you will

- ♦ *Be more conscious of the forces and events that shape cultures and societies*
- ♦ *Be able to speak and write clearly and well about myths and the cultures they represent*
- ♦ *Be able to encounter myths and cultures you have not previously studied, and be able to reason to some understanding of them on your own.*
- ♦ *Have a better understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures*
- ♦ *Recognize references and allusions to these myths when you encounter them in literature and art*
- ♦ *Take pleasure and enjoyment from your knowledge*

Texts

There is a great deal of reading in this course. Some of it will be easier, and some will be more difficult. Keeping up with all the reading provides the surest means of doing well, and procrastinating is sure to get you into trouble. Some of the stories will seem strange to you, but I think you will enjoy them.

Dundes, Sacred Narrative

Erdoes and Ortiz, American Indian Myths and Legends

Harris and Platzner, Classical Mythology: Images and Insights, 2nd ed.

Humphries, Ovid, Metamorphoses

Lhalungpa, The Life of Milarepa

Sanders, The Epic of Gilgamesh

Sproul, Primal Myths

Tedlock, Popol Vuh

Zolbrod, Dine Bahane, The Navajo Creation Story

Grade Breakdown:		Grade Scale:	
Journals, Quizzes, Shorter Writing	150 points	901-1000 points	A
Exams	300 points	801-900 points	B
Group Project	100 points	701-800 points	C
Papers	300 points	601-700 points	D
Participation	150 points	Below 600 points	F
Total	1000 points		

About Grades

Adequate work, that is, doing all the assignments and going through the motions with some degree of skill will earn you a C. If you go through the motions without skill, miss deadlines consistently, or miss class you may also earn a D. Extra effort and work of good quality will get you a B. Excellent work, going above and beyond the requirements for assignments with skill, insight, and creativity should earn an A. Doing an assignment is no guarantee of an A or a B. You must do it well.

Attendance and Participation

Participation is required. You can't participate if you're not here. If you miss more than a week (that's ONE class meeting), your grade will probably suffer, both because you've missed participating in that class and because you will find it difficult to pick up from where you left off. Serious illnesses and emergencies, and participation in OFFICIAL university events (team athletic competitions and band, for instance) are accommodated according to university policy, but do not cut class and then expect a great deal of sympathy if you need more time because you get sick. Participation in social, service, and pre-professional organizations is voluntary, so plan accordingly. No instructor may require you to miss class in another course as a condition of doing well in his/her class. If you have observations or other major-related obligations, you are expected to schedule them around your classes.

Dates to Remember

Papers or projects will be due October 4, November 1, November 27, and December 6.

Exams will be on October 6 during class and December 13 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in CH310.

Academic Honesty

The English Department's statement on plagiarism is as follows: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned work and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. I expect you to do your own work, to use only authorized help such as the Writing Center, conferences with me, and discussion groups in class. I expect you to use sources properly, and with appropriate imbedding into your work, use of appropriate paraphrase, summary, and quotation skills, and careful and painstaking documentation. This applies not only to books but also to media other than print, including web and online sources.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583 (9th St. Hall).